

EARLY ENGLISH TEXT SOCIETY

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OS 355. William Caxton, *The Golden Legend. Vol. I*, ed. Mayumi Taguchi, John Scahill, and Satoko Tokunaga.

Jacobus de Voragine's collection of saints' lives, the *Legenda aurea*, was one of the central texts of the late Middle Ages and read across Europe. This translation was printed in 1483-4, as one of the first of Caxton's books in English. He remarks in his prologue that people might wonder why he had not simply printed the English translation already in existence, and explains that he had the English, French and Latin texts in front of him as he worked, and, since each contained material absent from the others, he was conflating them. This English source was close to the *Gilte Legende*, a translation made in 1438 of Jean de Vignay's *Légende dorée* of c. 1333-40, itself a close translation of the *Legenda aurea*. Caxton, however, chose to make a new translation from a substantially re-organised version of this French source, using the Latin and English for corrections and other modifications; and in another significant addition to his sources he inserted a translation of an extensive set of passages from the Old Testament. Caxton's *The Golden Legend* is thus much more than an English language version of the *Legenda aurea*.

The Golden Legend is a substantial work. Voragine's *Legenda aurea* consists of the feasts of the Church year and the lives of the saints in calendar order, beginning with Advent. The present editors hope to present Caxton's work in its entirety in several volumes, with vol. II consisting of the Old Testament insertions, planned to appear in the following year. Vol. I will contain the Temporale (the cycle of main, mostly moveable, festivals in the Church's liturgical year). It will include the Introduction to the first two volumes; each volume in the set will contain its own notes, glossary, and Index of Proper Names. The Society previously published the *Gilte Legende* in four volumes, edited by Richard Hamer and Vida Russell (OS 315, 327, 328, 339). *The Golden Legend* is a welcome addition to the series, building on the Society's many previous editions of Caxton's works.

OS 356. Osbern Bokenham, *Lives of the Saints. Vol. I*, ed. Simon Horobin.

Bokenham was an Augustinian friar, poet, and translator, best known for his *Legendys of Hooly Wummen* (edited for the Society by Mary Serjeantson, OS 206). He refers in another work, the *Mappula Anglie*, to a translation which he made of the *Legenda aurea* and other English saints' lives. This work was believed to have been lost but has since been identified by the present editor as the collection of saints' lives preserved in a unique manuscript recently found in the library of Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford House. The recognition of this major work by a known fifteenth-century writer, long known to have existed, but thought to have been lost is a remarkable literary discovery. It is intended to publish this collection in three volumes; this first volume will contain 65 of the 180 lives, as well as the Introduction, giving an account of Bokenham's career, with a full description of the Abbotsford MS.

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